

INTERTRIBAL BISON COOPERATIVE
RESPONSE DOCUMENT:
Docket No. 05-015-1
Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD

June 27, 2005

APHIS, Station 3C71
4700 River Road - Unit 118
Riverdale, MD 20737-1238

RE: Comments to Docket No. 05-015-1, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD

The draft strategic plan calls for making the entire system mandatory by January 2009. Is a mandatory identification program necessary to achieve a successful animal disease surveillance, monitoring, and response system to support Federal animal health programs? Please explain why or why not?

RESPONSE: A mandatory system is not necessary. A voluntary system would be successful when the responsibility is on those responsible for moving animals. Other groups are advocating mandatory systems so they will add value to systems such as source verification.

In the current Draft Strategic Plan, the NAIS would require that producers be responsible for having their animals identified before the animals move to a premises where they are to be commingled with other animals, such as a sale barn. At what point and how should compliance be ensured? For example, should market managers, fair managers, etc., be responsible for ensuring compliance with this requirement before animals are unloaded at their facility or event? Please give the reasons for your response.

RESPONSE: Some producers do not have the facilities to ID their animals thus managers of areas where animals commingle could be considered an ID/tagging site allowing for those animals to be identified at unloading prior to commingling, thus allowing those producers comply.

In regard to cattle, individual identification would be achieved with an AIN tag that would be attached to the animal's left ear. It is acknowledged that some producers do not have the facilities to tag their animals; thus, the Draft Program Standards document contains an option for tagging sites, which are authorized premises where owners or persons responsible for cattle could have the cattle sent to have AIN tags applied.

Do you think this is a viable option, i.e., can markets or other locations successfully provide this service to producers who are unable to tag their cattle at their farms? Please give the reasons for your response.

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RESPONSE: It would be necessary for all market places to be tagging sites to allow producers to comply with NAIS. If only a select group of locations are designated as tagging sites this could create a burden on some producers/participants. Financial assistance should also be made available to those that do not have reasonable access to meet compliance.

The current Draft Strategic Plan does not specify how compliance with identification and movement reporting requirements will be achieved when the sale is direct between a buyer and seller (or through their agents). In what manner should compliance with these requirements be achieved?

RESPONSE: Identification and movement reporting should be through the buyer and the seller or their respective agents utilizing simple technology such as computer, fax, phone or the postal service.

Who should be responsible for meeting these requirements?

RESPONSE: This area has the most potential for compliance issues, however, if the responsibility to report rests with both the buyer and seller, there should be no difficulty reporting as long as the penalty is adequate and appropriate for those found to be in noncompliance.

How can these types of transactions be inputted into the NAIS to obtain the necessary information in the least costly, most efficient manner?

RESPONSE: Issuing agencies, of Certificates of Veterinary Inspections could easily and cost effectively, enter the data into a state or federal system. For those movements that do not require a veterinary inspection the responsible party could report to the state or federal system directly, via computer, fax, phone or the postal service.

USDA suggests that animals should be identified anytime prior to entering commerce or being commingled with animals from other premises. Is this recommendation adequate to achieve timely trace back capabilities to support animal health programs or should a timeframe (age limit) for identifying the animals be considered? Please give the reasons for your response.

RESPONSE: Animals that remain on premise of origin have no need for ID; it would not be cost efficient to the producer or the government. To provide traceability of all animals each and every transfer should be documented and recorded, regardless of age, otherwise the system would not function properly.

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Are the timelines for implementing the NAIS, as discussed in the Draft Strategic Plan, realistic, too aggressive (i.e., allow too little time), or not aggressive enough (i.e., do not ensure that the NAIS will be implemented in a timely manner)? Please give the reasons for your response.

RESPONSE: The timeline is appropriate, but should be extended to allow room for trial and error changes.

Should requirements for all species be implemented within the same timelines, or should some flexibility be allowed? Please give the reasons for your response.

RESPONSE: Flexibility for the implementation requirements for different species is needed. We do not believe there is enough understanding amongst all necessary producers/participants yet to move forward.

What are the most cost-effective and efficient ways for submitting information to the database (entered via the Internet, file transfer from a herd management computer system, mail, phone, third party submission of data)?

RESPONSE: The most cost effective way is mail service, but may not be the timeliest, in this electronic environment.

Does the type of entity (e.g., producer, market, slaughter house), the size of the entity, or other factors make some methods for information submission more or less practical, costly, or efficient? Please provide supporting information if possible.

RESPONSE: Since not all have access to electronic systems, we think a more flexible process is necessary to allow individuals to participate in a process of their choice that is not only cost effective, but reliable and secure.

We are aware that many producers are concerned about the confidentiality of the information collected in the NAIS. Given the information identified in the draft documents, what specific information do you believe should be protected from disclosure, and why?

RESPONSE: Confidentiality is not necessary when the animals enter commerce or are transferred to another location. Each individual is responsible for animals from where they originate; there must be traceability back to each and every entity involved in each and every transfer of animals.

If confidentiality is a concern for a producer, there could be a state or federal system set up at a cost to those producers who want to participate in a secure system, that fiscal burden should only rest on those wanting a secure system not on the rest of the producers/participants whose only concern is health and safety. Although, in the case of an outbreak of a disease, the producers/participants

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information should only be released to essential health/veterinary representatives and protected from public disclosure.

The NAIS as planned would require States, producers, and other participating entities to provide information and develop and maintain records. How could we best minimize the burden associated with these requirements? For example, should both the seller and the buyer of a specific group of animals report the movement of the animals, or is reporting by one party adequate?

RESPONSE: Both the buyer and the seller or their respective agents should be responsible for reporting. Entities such as States or Tribes would then be responsible for matching these transfers and insuring their accuracy.

How should a private database system be funded? Please give the reasons for your response.

RESPONSE: This depends on the system demands. In those areas requesting confidentiality and other complicating factors, they should be funded by the producers or entities making those demands. To those simply trying to meet compliance, funding should be generated by Federal funding to meet the requirements.

Should the NAIS allow for multiple privately managed databases? Please explain why or why not.

RESPONSE: Multiple databases should be considered and are only practical way to achieve success and meet the demands of all participants and their unique situations.

Should a public (government) system be made available as well as a privately managed system, so that producers would have a choice? Please give the reasons for your response.

RESPONSE: Both systems should be available with the public system free to the participant and private systems available to those with specific demands and concerns that can be audited by a public system for accuracy.

Should a privately managed system include all species? Please give the reasons for your response.

RESPONSE: The systems should be species specific with all systems reporting into one public system due to the various types of identification for each species.

Would either system work equally well, at the State level? Please explain why or why not.

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RESPONSE: Both systems would work equally well at the State level as long as the same data is being recorded into the systems and is compatible with other state/tribal/federal systems.